

June 15th news:

National:

India facing worst water crisis, millions of lives under threat: NITI Aayog

India is suffering from the worst water crisis in its history and millions of lives and livelihoods are under threat, the NITI Aayog has said.

It also warned that the crisis was only going to get worse and by 2030, the country's water demand is projected to be twice the available supply, implying severe water scarcity for hundreds of millions of people and an eventual six per cent loss in the country's GDP.

Currently, 600 million Indians face high to extreme water stress and about 200,000 thousand people die every year due to inadequate access to safe water, said the NITI Aayog report on Composite Water Management Index (CWMI) released on 13th June which aims to enable effective water management in Indian states in the face of this growing crisis.

The report ranks Gujarat at the top in managing its water resources in the reference year (2016-17) followed by Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. The worst states include Jharkhand, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Among North Eastern and Himalayan states, Tripura has been adjudged number one in 2016-17 followed by Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Assam.

In terms of incremental change in the index (over 2015-16 level), Rajasthan holds number one position in general states and Tripura ranks at first position amongst Northeastern and Himalayan states, the report said.

According to the NITI Aayog report, Centre-state and inter-state cooperation were some of the key levers to help address the crisis.

The report was on 13th June by Water Resources Minister Nitin Gadkari and NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar.

The NITI Aayog said that the water management index would provide useful information for the states and concerned Central ministries and departments enabling them to formulate and implement suitable strategies for better management of water resources.

India rejects UN report on human rights violation in Kashmir

India on 14th June rejected the report by the Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Kashmir.

According to the External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar, it is fallacious and questioned the intent in bringing out such a report. The spokesperson said, it is a compilation of unverified information and seeks to build a false narrative.

Mr Kumar said, the report violates India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He stated that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and Pakistan is in illegal and forcible occupation of a part of the Indian state through aggression.

India has repeatedly called upon Pakistan to vacate the occupied territories. The incorrect description of Indian territory in the report is misleading and unacceptable. There are no entities such as Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

India said, the authors have ignored the pattern of cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan and territories under its illegal control. Cross-border terror is aimed at suppressing the will of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, disrupting its social fabric and undermining India's integrity.

The MEA said, India's protest and views have been conveyed strongly to the Office of the High Commissioner for UN Human Rights. India expressed its deep concern regarding individual prejudices being allowed to undermine the credibility of a UN institution.

Economy

20 states sign MoU with govt to implement National Health Insurance scheme

Twenty states have signed memorandums of understanding with the Centre to implement the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS).

West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Delhi are some of the states that have not signed up yet. West Bengal had shown interest but had not sent any formal request, it was revealed at the health ministers' conclave on the NHPS.

Twelve states have decided to take the insurance route for payments to hospitals. These include Uttarakhand, Haryana, Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya.

Gujarat, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have decided to adopt the hybrid model where a part of the payment will be made through insurance and the rest through trusts.

The CEO of the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Yojana said Gujarat would disburse payments through insurance for claims up to Rs 50,000 and through trust for claims over that amount.

Among the states that are adopting this scheme, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Bihar do not have their own health insurance schemes and constitute 30-40 per cent of the total beneficiaries. Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan have their own schemes but are going with the NHPS.

A pilot project in Haryana has revealed that Socio-economic Caste Census (SECC) data was successful in tracing 80 per cent families in target villages.

Hospital providers were represented at the meeting by Apollo Hospitals Executive Chairman Preetha Reddy. This is despite the hospitals federation not being happy with rates prescribed by the government.

The NHPS will cost the exchequer Rs 120 billion. The Union government has said it will provide 60 per cent of the funds, and the state governments are expected to pool in the remaining 40 per cent.

The NITI Aayog has estimated that the new health insurance scheme will cost around Rs 60 billion in the first year. The calculation is based on the assumption that the premium per family will be between Rs 1,000 and Rs 1,200.

The government came up with the NHPS after it found that the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna had become redundant with many states already having schemes providing higher insurance. Under the RSBY, cover up to Rs 30,000 was provided. The health ministry's proposal to raise the cover of Rs 100,000 did not work out as many states are allowing higher claims. It is expected that the NHPS will be formally inaugurated on August 15

Environment:

UN draft warns global warming set to exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius

Global warming is on course to exceed the most stringent goal set in the Paris agreement by around 2040, threatening economic growth, according to a draft report that is the U.N.'s starkest warning yet of the risks of climate change.

Governments can still cap temperatures below the strict 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7° Fahrenheit) ceiling agreed in 2015 only with "rapid and far-reaching" transitions in the world economy, according to the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The final government draft, obtained by Reuters and dated June 4, is due for publication in October in South Korea after revisions and approval by governments. It will be the main scientific guide for combating climate change.

The Paris climate agreement, adopted by almost 200 nations in 2015, set a goal of limiting warming to "well below" a rise of 2°C above pre-industrial times while "pursuing efforts" for the tougher 1.5° goal. The deal has been weakened after U.S. President Donald Trump decided last year to pull out and promote U.S. fossil fuels.

Temperatures are already up about 1°C (1.8°F) and are rising at a rate of about 0.2°C a decade, according to the draft, requested by world leaders as part of the Paris Agreement.

In a plus-1.5°C world, for instance, sea level rise would be 10 centimetres (3.94 inches) less than with 2°C, exposing about 10 million fewer people in coastal areas to risks such as floods, storm surges or salt spray damaging crops. It says current government pledges in the Paris Agreement are too weak to limit warming to 1.5°C.

The report outlines one new scenario to stay below 1.5°C, for instance, in which technological innovations and changes in lifestyles could mean sharply lower energy demand by 2050 even with rising economic growth.

And there is no sign that the draft has been watered down by Trump's doubts that climate change is driven by man-made greenhouse gases.

The draft says renewable energies, such as wind, solar and hydro power, would have to surge by 60 percent from 2020 levels by 2050 to stay below 1.5°C "while primary energy from coal decreases by two-thirds".